2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

[P.3]
[P.2 contains no TEXT]

THE TARO CULT

1. *Introductory*

X 194 SINCE the European occupation of Papua there have sprung up in various parts of the territory a number of new religious cults. At first fairly sweeping the natives off their feet in an excess of zeal, and causing the authorities some perplexity as to cause and treatment, these cults have for the most part gradually subsided, leaving their followers apparently little better and little worse than before. But, although their most exaggerated features have fortunately disappeared, there can be no doubt that these movements bring about a permanent change in the lives of those whom they reach. They have occurred with such frequency and have exerted so wide and powerful an influence upon the natives, that we cannot gainsay them a practical interest. It is a matter of recognized importance to examine these movements in a painstaking and, if possible, a sympathetic manner, to determine how much good is in them, and how much evil, to uncover their causes, and to decide what treatment they deserve at the hands of the Government.

X 194 In a paper entitled 'Five New Religious Cults in
● 113 British New Guinea',[1] E. W. P. Chinnery and A. C. Haddon have briefly described most of these remarkable movements. The earliest of the five, 'The Prophet of Milne Bay,' dates from 1893. The second was the *Baigona* or Snake cult of the Northern and North-eastern Division (1911–12);[2] the third the 'German Wislin of Saibai' in Torres Straits (1913); the fourth the *Kava Keva* of the Northern Division (1914); and the fifth the 'Kekesi Rites' of Manau, also in the Northern Division (1914).

[1] *Hibbert Journal*, vol. xv, No. 3, April 1917, pp. 448–63.
[2] Vide also J. H. P. Murray, in *Papua Ann. Report*, 1911–12, p. 14, and A. E. Oelrichs, *ibid.*, p. 129; also Copland King in *Ann. Report*, 1912–13, p. 154.